

LGBTQ OUTspoken By Kaley Lai



Birmingham's newest collaborative sphere called the Edge of Chaos is a space in Lister Hill Library where innovative ideas and creative energy flows. The atmosphere envelops a diverse group of people from many walks of life to discuss and combine academic pursuits and encourage social interaction. In a recent event, the Edge of Chaos hosted the first ever OUTspoken discussion during the University of Alabama at Birmingham's pride week for LGBTQ involvement and activism. In the first session, OUTspoken offered insight into the active LGBTQ community and noted its relevance

in Birmingham, highlighting one of The Edge of Chaos' aspirations to prevail as a domain where intellectuals discuss meaningful concepts honestly and without fear. Not only do Edge of Chaos events offer captivating topics for discussion, but they also introduce opportunities to learn cutting-edge information that provides worldly perspective.

At OUTspoken, a variety of guest speakers from around the world addressed a wicked problem, presenting new and innovative ideas on being active and involved in the LGBTQ community as well as on how to become involved as a community organizer. All five speakers engaged listeners in advising engagement, messaging, and creativity to spread the word outside the LGBTQ community.

"It is our duty to fight for our freedom! It is our duty to win! We must love and protect each other! We have nothing to lose but our chains!" we were called to chant by Kirin Kanakannatt, a first generation Indian who is a self-identified queer. She discussed the insurgent concept of being comfortable with the uncomfortable. The atmosphere of the chant was absolutely liberating, and felt unwavering and empowering. The message rang clear: as a community we can do anything. We can solve wicked problems and reach out to the world. From the liberal gay atheist living in the South to the photographer extraordinaire HIV activist, there is never a lack of brilliance and inspiration within the LGBTQ community who believes in this same ideal.

Along with influential speakers comes the presentation of unique initiatives through various projects and non-profit organizations such as The Change Project, which is presented as an example of the work being done within the community. Event coordinator Steven Romeo quoted, "Be Bold. Be Brave. [By] Taking revolutionary art off the walls and onto our bod-



ies.” This slogan for The Change Project empowers individuals to take a stand and work for sexual equality. It allows young adults to showcase their leadership and represent the future generation that will, in the future, become the change. There is a certain aura in the Edge of Chaos that inspires people and advocates revolutionary work, which is what the LGBTQ community strives for. These expressions of energy and passion are what the Edge of Chaos space is best utilized for. It shows the true purpose of the zone: to learn socially, to grow through empowering others, and to be open to collaboration for innovation.

These events that are aimed to empower individuals within and around the LGBTQ community have in many ways allowed for a broader understanding and acceptance of the community. It has presented a call to action initiative that people are enthusiastic to uphold. The Edge of Chaos is not just available for conversing about academics; it is a place for socializing and for ideas to bounce off of other spirited individuals. Through showcasing the impactful faces of the LGBTQ society and presenting projects that inspire the surrounding community, Edge of Chaos has become a sphere of collaboration that is working toward and succeeding in forming new and creative solutions to old problems. This effect will resonate throughout the public and create opportunities for the future generation.